

## The Sunday School and the Church.

BY REV. J. K. NUTTALL.

I regard the church as the starting-point of all agencies and efforts aiming at the extension of the Kingdom of God, and as the goal towards which all Christian endeavors should tend. The church should supply a constant succession of workers for God, and into the church should be gathered the fruits of their toil. The church should conserve, cherish, and consolidate the spiritual conquests its workers have won in the harvest-field of the world.

Between the church and the Sunday school there should be the closest relationship. To speak of them as two distinct institutions is to misinterpret the spirit and aims of both. The church is all inclusive, embracing all forms of aggressive Christianity. The Sunday school is but one of these. The officers and teachers are the servants of the church. The church should furnish them, and sustain them. Directly or indirectly the church should wield undisputed, yet kindly and sympathetic, sway over them.

While only one form of Christian activity, an experience of twenty-one years in the pastoral office constrains me to give it the first place in the aggressive energies of the church. The reasons are surely obvious: a Christian church is built up by additions to its membership from two directions—from within and from without. The church should gather in from the ranks of those who keep aloof from public worship, and I am in full sympathy with all wise efforts in that direction. But is not prevention better than cure? Would not the church show greater wisdom if its efforts were specially and primarily engaged in the work of prevention, rather than in the work of restoration? It is a good work to bring back to purity those who have wallowed in sin; but is it not a better work to save our boys and girls from ever following paths of vice? By doing this the church builds up from within.

Moreover, I believe that a church built up from within will contain elements of greater power and permanence than if built up mainly from without. Continuous accessions to our church membership from the families of our congregation, and from the classes of our Sunday schools, would secure, as nothing else would, church unity and compactness. The church that spares no effort in the wise and patient training of those whose characters are yet unformed, and whose habits are yet unfixed, and have large harvests whose value will be increasingly manifest.

"Habits are soon acquired.  
But when we strive to throw them off,  
'Tis been flayed alive."

The clinging power of habit applies to habits that are good as well as to habits that are bad. The two chief training places for the formation of such habits are the home and the school. The parent should look upon the teacher as one who supplements, not one who supplants, himself. The parent is primarily responsible, then the teacher, for the training of the child. The good habits forged and fostered by partnership in the good work on the part of parent and teacher will not easily be cast aside in after years, but will prove a mighty factor in preserving from evil, in strengthening the will, in fashioning character, and in determining conduct.

That the church has not grasped the greatness of the opportunity in the past is clear. The stream now flows from the school into the world. We must resolutely set ourselves, by God's blessing, to reverse its course, and the stream must run from the Sunday school into the church. How can we bring this about?

I. The church should select and send into the Sunday school its best qualified and most capable members.

The Sunday school is a teaching institution, and teaching qualifications are a necessity. I would not say one word in disparagement of the self-sacrificing army of teachers who have hitherto carried on the work. All honor to them for the good they have done. But the conditions of effective teaching are becoming more exacting every year. Education has reached a higher level all round. In recent years methods of teaching in

our day schools have completely changed. Our Sunday school must advance with the changed conditions of our time. Intelligence, culture, the ability to master and the ability to communicate the facts and teachings of the lesson, tact, sympathy with child-life—these are some of the qualifications our teachers should possess.

II. The church should select and send into the Sunday school its most religious men.

The Sunday school is a religious institution. Sunday school work is religious work, and for religious work we must have religious men. The Sunday school attempts as religious a work as that of the pulpit, and requires the same divine unction and power. If our preachers need to be filled with the Holy Ghost, so do our teachers. If our preachers need to grasp the hand of the Master before they can do deeds of power, so do our teachers. If our preachers need to be men of faith and men of prayer, so do our teachers. Let it be repeated; let it stand out in characters bold and clear:

Sunday school work is religious work, and for religious work we must have religious men.

III. The church should offer increasing prayer for the workers it selects and sends into the Sunday school.

1. The church should pray that teachers should teach only the truth of God. The moral nature of the child is like virgin soil, the seed it receives is rapid in its germination. If truth be sown, the harvest will be pure and plentiful. If error be sown, the harvest will be equally abundant, but noxious in its character. The church should pray that teachers may be diligent searchers for the truth, seek the promised guidance of the Spirit in their search, and under divine direction present the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to the members of their class.

2. The church should pray that teachers may truly believe and feel the truths they teach. Young people are quick to detect unreality. Instinctively they discriminate between the seeming and the real, between what is said and meant, and what is said and not felt. As truly as that insincerity in the pulpit will breed sceptics in the pew, so unreality in the teacher will breed unbelief in the scholar.

3. The church should pray that conversion may crown the teaching. For nothing may the church pray with greater confidence than for the conversion of its young people. The most natural time for conversion is not the eventide, but the morning of life. "The most important ten years of life are from five to fifteen years of age." To the question, "How soon may conversion be expected?" I reply, "When a child is able to know his sin he is able to know his Saviour."

4. The church should pray that consecration may crown conversion. Conversion is not the end, it is but the beginning of the teacher's work. Consecration is the fruit of which conversion is the seed. To exhibit the meekness, patience, courage of Christ at all times; to do the will of Christ, in all things; to be in active and life-long alliance with Christ in claiming and gaining men for Himself—this is the Christianity to which conversion should lead. A young soldier belonging to a regiment then stationed in Sunderland came to my vestry one Sunday evening, to avow his recent conversion to God. I said, "Are you ready to suffer persecution for Christ's sake?" His answer was, "Yes, sir," and after a pause, he added, "and I am ready to die for Him if He wants me." There we have the spirit out of which true consecration springs. "Ye are not your own . . . ye are Christ's." Our scholars should be lovingly drawn to the deliberate acceptance of Christ as their Master—Master in the most absolute sense—Master of their talents and time, their pleasures and pursuits, their occupations, and possessions. Let us develop in them mental, moral, and spiritual robustness, not effeminacy; enduring strength, not pietism. Let us kindle in them nobler desires than to live in "gardens walled around," safe from every tempter and every foe, or to pray to "be delivered as quickly as possible from this wicked world, that they may get their golden crowns." Let us train them to "endure

hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to invade the back slums of our towns and cities, and fight vice hand to hand, and face to face; to seek out helplessness, ignorance, suffering in their dark haunts and homes, and rescue their unhappy victims; to carry light and hope to those who have abandoned themselves to bitter despair, believing they are forgotten by men, and forsaken by God. Let us inspire them with a desire for service, for hard work, for self-denying toil, in God's great field, and teach them to look with scorn upon a dainty, kid-gloved, self-seeking, pleasure-loving Christianity, and take their place among the saviors and benefactors of society, the reformers and redeemers of their age.

"Build me a hut to die in," said the great African missionary; and into that rude hut David Livingstone entered. Four days afterwards he passed into the rest of God, saying, "I am going home."

"Use us for Thy glory, Lord,  
In the way that seemeth right;  
Whether but to wait and watch,  
Or to gird our limbs and fight,  
Marching on or standing still,  
Each is best when 'tis Thy will.  
When at last the end shall come,  
What, O Lord, is death but this?  
Door of our dear Father's home,  
Entrance into perfect bliss;  
Peril past and labor done,  
Sorrow over, peace begun."

—Pulpit Treasury.

## Hearing and Answering of Prayer.

Some persons nowadays are seeking to effect good by trying to analyze the reasons why God in specific cases does and in others does not answer prayer. They practically argue in such a way as to lead to the conclusion that answered prayer comes as a reward of meritorious asking. Such speculation is both erroneous and dangerous. It is ours simply to pray in faith, and to leave the results to the wisdom and goodness of God. Prayer's power and effects cannot be reasoned out. Dr. Pierson well says: "I have made up my mind that there are some things in the mind of God that I cannot get into mine. Hence I do not attempt to reconcile the two revealed truths—that God is unchangeable, and that prayer changes him."—*The Moravian*.

No sweet love but honesty.—Robert Green.

Walk with the beautiful.—E. H. Berrington.

What I aspired to be comforts me.—Browning.

Shine like the sun in every corner.—George Herbert.

Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.—Isaiah.

When shows break up, what but one's self is sure.—Walt Whitman.

No one should laugh at men but him who right heartily loves him.—Jean Paul Richter.

Salvation is a real having, not an escape without anything, as people run for their lives from fire and flood.

Our Master left his home to bless ours. What are we doing to bless our own and others' homes?—*Advance*.

The praise of others may be of use in teaching us not what we are, but what we ought to be.

Let no knowledge satisfy but that which lifts above the world, which weans from the word, which makes the world a footstool.—*Spurgeon*.

There is an excessive amiability that is quite as unregenerate as irritability, and lies at the bottom of false notions of benevolence.—A. T. Pierson.

Polished steel will not shine in the dark; no more can reason, however refined and cultivated, shine efficaciously, but as it reflects the light of divine truth shed from heaven.

It is not work that kills men; it is worry. Work is healthful. You can hardly put more upon a man than he can bear. It is not the revolution that destroys machinery, but the fraction.—*Beecher*.

Perhaps God shows us things, sometimes, and puts them away again for us, to give us, by and by, when we are bigger, as mothers do with children's playthings that are too beautiful for them to have right off.—*Mrs. Whitney*.